THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) A policy decision has been taken to link the Capitals of North Eastern States by rail. According construction of new lines from Kumarghat to Agartala and from Harmuti nagar have been tioned. Construction of a new line from Diphu to Karong as the first phase of the rail link to Imphal has been included in the Budget and would be taken up after obtaining the requisite clearances. Gauge conversion of line from Bairabi to Katak-hal as the first phase of line to Sairang/ Aizwal has also been included in the budget and would be taken up after reuisite clearances. A survey for construction of a rail line to Gangtok has also been sanctioned.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Losses due to rain and floods in Orissa

311. SHRIMATI JAYANTI PAT-NAIK: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated damage caused to Orissa by heavy rain and flood during the last monsoon season;

(b) the amount of fund needed to bear loss suffered by farmers and for the reconstruction of roads, ponds, canals and bridges in that State;

(c) the fund sanctioned by the Central Government for these purposes; and

(d) the details of the steps taken in the that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. S. VENU'JOPALACHARI): (a) According to reports received from the Government of Orissa, heavy rains and floods during the South-West monsoon, 1997, affected a population of 3.93 lakh in 19 districts claimed 29 human lives and damaged 8/678 houses and public prop-oerty worth Rs. 125.83 crore.

(b) Government of Orissa have assessed the requirements of relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in various sectors at Rs. 125.84 crore.

(c) and (d) Under the existing scheme, the State Government undertake relief and rehabilitation measures in the wake of natural calamities utilising the allocations of the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF). During 1997-98, the CRF allocation for Orissa is Rs. 51.72 crore consisting of a Central share of Rs. 38.79 crore and State share of Rs. 12.93 crore. Government of India have already released three instalments of Central share of CRF amounting to Rs. 29.09 crore to Government of Orissa during the current year.

Damage to- cotton crop in Punjab

312. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 80% of the cotton crop in A bohar Fazilka of Ferozepur district and Muktsar Malout of Muktsar district in Punjab has been damaged due to American Ball Worm inspitc of many sprays of pesticides on the crop;

(b) what steps have been taken to stop such colossal loss to farmers; and

(c) whether there is a proposal to give them compensation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI): (a) Information obtained from Govt, of Punjab reveals that cotton crop in parts of Abohar Fazilka areas of Ferozpur district and most of the area of Muktsar and Malout of Muktsar has been damaged due to heavy and prolonged rains resulting in water logging in, these areas. As per the information very little incidence of American Ballworm has been observed.

(b) and (c) The farmers were advised to spray the cotton crop as per recom-mendation of the State Department of Agriculture. Registration Committee has already approved a number of pesticides,